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18 July 1950

Dear Mr. Webb:

1. The State-Defense Staff study of 1 May 1950, on "Production of National Intelligence," transmitted with your letter of 7 July for my comments, brings up for consideration the two conflicting theories which have prevailed in Washington for some time on the responsibility within our Government for intelligence relating to the national security, i.e., a responsible ^{single director} (central agency) versus a (responsible) committee of co-equal directors of the several intelligence agencies.

2. Your staff study favors the second approach, somewhat similar to the British system, whereby this Agency would provide for the responsible Committee funds, headquarters, personnel, and certain services, but the Committee would have the collective responsibility for Estimates and Studies by a cooperative process.

3. You will recall that NSC 50 was opposed to collective responsibility and re-affirmed the value of an advisory committee of intelligence chiefs. To change to your proposed cooperative system would entail, I think, new legislation; so the NSC should, if it desires such a change, take steps accordingly and should advise Congress that it favors the idea of committee responsibility and authority rather than the present system of a responsible agency.

4. I think that, under the existing legislation, it was the intent of Congress to have a responsible central intelligence agency to coordinate intelligence matters. Certainly I, as Director of Central Intelligence, am the one called before Congressional Committees on intelligence matters and am held responsible by them. In his testimony recently the Secretary of Defense stated he had "not been advised by CIA." He did not refer to the intelligence agencies in the Pentagon. The President also calls upon me for intelligence estimates. This would indicate that the Executive also believes in a responsible central agency.

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5. I am glad that this matter has now been brought up and hope that it will be clarified for the benefit of all concerned as well as for our national security. With this in mind I enclose two proposed National Security Council Directives to reflect my views on a strong central responsible agency with adequate authority to go with its responsibility, in lieu of the proposal you enclosed favoring a responsible committee (now National Intelligence Authority) of the intelligence chiefs.

6. When the basic principle has been decided, of a responsible agency versus an authoritative committee, it might well be possible even if this Agency remains the responsible authority to reorganize CIA to the extent of including an Estimates Group and a Current Intelligence Group. Under my concept, however, they would be of necessity responsible to the Director of Central Intelligence rather than to a Committee, and the DCI would have the necessary authority to carry out his responsibilities.

7. With regard to NSC 50, mentioned in the Staff Study, I note that Section 5c is a statement of principles and that the comment therewith disavows the concept of collective responsibility. Furthermore, the last sentence in Section 6b of NSC 50 on Organization of CIA recognizes that there may be other methods of organization which will accomplish the objectives. On the other hand Section 6a(1) of NSC 50 calls for definite action on a combined Office of Operations. My plan to carry out this instruction in Section 6a(1), confirmed by subsequent NSC action, was submitted to the Departments of State and Defense about a year ago but no definite reply has been received. I should also be glad to have this matter clarified.

8. (I) note that you propose to submit your Staff Study with its proposed National Security Council Directive direct to the NSC rather than in accordance with Section 102d(1) and (2) of the National Security Act of 1947 (as amended). (I should appreciate it, therefore, if you would submit therewith these comments and enclosures) (so that the NSC may decide what action it wishes to take.)

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Addition to Paragraph 2 of 18 July Draft letter to Mr. Webb (7)

I note in the Staff Study about the "Composition" of the new "Intelligence Advisory Committee" (page 2 of your proposed National Security Council Directive) that it is not stated whether the new Committee is composed of the Intelligence Chiefs themselves of the existing intelligence agencies (the same as the present Intelligence Advisory Committee) or of their "full-time representatives" "at I.A.C. Headquarters." Nothing is said about this new Committee being under the Chairmanship of the Director of Central Intelligence or his representative, and no other name is given to the full-time representatives at "I.A.C. Headquarters."

Elsewhere there are indications that the D.C.I. is expected to be a type of Production Manager for the new Committee and that he, as well as the other members of the new Committee, may dissent from an Estimate prepared by the new Committee's National Estimates Staff.

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